

**What Is Claimed Is:**

1           1. A computer readable medium carrying one or more sequences of instructions for  
2           causing a first client system to enable a user to access a plurality of databases through a  
3           corresponding plurality of client systems contained in a manufacturing plant, wherein each  
4           of said plurality of client systems is already designed to access data in a corresponding one  
5           of said plurality of databases, wherein execution of said one or more sequences of  
6           instructions by one or more processors causes said one or more processors to perform the  
7           actions of:

8                 executing a user application which is related to operation/control of a manufacturing  
9           process in said manufacturing plant;

10                enabling said user to instantiate a user interface from said user application;

11                enabling said user to specify a database of interest and a search criteria using said  
12           user interface, wherein said database of interest is accessible via a second client contained  
13           in said plurality of client systems;

14                sending said search criteria to said second client;

15                receiving a corresponding response; and

16                displaying said corresponding response.

1           2. The computer readable medium of claim 1, further comprising:

2                enabling said user to specify an operation associated with data forming said  
3           corresponding response;

4                executing said operation.

1           3. The computer readable medium of claim 2, wherein said user interface is  
2 implemented in the form of an access module executed when said user instantiates said user  
3 interface, further comprising:

4           receiving data representing said operation in said user application; and  
5           sending said data representing said operation and data representing said response to  
6 said second client, wherein said second client executes said operation using said response.

1           4. The computer readable medium of claim 3, wherein said data representing said  
2 response comprises an identifier of the data retrieved from said database of interest.

1           5. A computer readable medium carrying one or more sequences of instructions for  
2 enabling a new user application to access data in a plurality of databases accessible through  
3 a corresponding plurality of user applications executing on a corresponding plurality of  
4 client systems, wherein said new user application and said plurality of user applications are  
5 related to operation/control of a manufacturing process in a manufacturing plant, said  
6 computer readable medium comprising:

7           means for implementing a first plurality of procedures according to a first interface,  
8 wherein said first plurality of interfaces can be implemented on each of said plurality of  
9 client systems, wherein said first plurality of procedures enable retrieval of desired data from  
10 a corresponding database accessible from the corresponding user application implemented  
11 on the corresponding client system; and

12           means for access which can be instantiated from said new user application, wherein  
13 said means for access enables a user to specify a first database and a search query, wherein

14 said first database is contained in said plurality of databases, wherein said means for access  
15 uses said first plurality of procedures to retrieve data matching said query.

1 6. The computer readable medium of claim 5, further comprising means for  
2 implementing a second plurality of procedures according to a second interface, wherein said  
3 second plurality of procedures enable said means for access to initiate and terminate an  
4 instance of said means for access.

1 7. The computer readable medium of claim 6, further comprising means for  
2 implementing a third plurality of procedures according to a third interface wherein said third  
3 plurality of procedures enable said access block to communicate an operation selected by  
4 said user, wherein said operation is executed on data accessed by said means for access.

1 8. The computer readable medium of claim 7, wherein said operation is executed on  
2 a user application which retrieves said data from the corresponding database.

1 9. A method of enabling a new user application to access data in a plurality of  
2 databases accessible through a corresponding plurality of user applications executing on a  
3 corresponding plurality of client systems, wherein said new user application and said  
4 plurality of user applications are related to operation/control of a manufacturing process in  
5 a manufacturing plant, said method comprising:

6 implementing a first plurality of procedures according to a first interface on each of  
7 said plurality of client systems, wherein said first plurality of procedures enable retrieval of

8 desired data from a corresponding database accessible from the corresponding user  
9 application implemented on the corresponding client system; and  
10 providing an access module which can be instantiated from said new user  
11 application, wherein said access module enables a user to specify a first database and a  
12 search query, wherein said first database is contained in said plurality of databases, wherein  
13 said access module uses said first plurality of procedures to retrieve data matching said  
14 query.

1 10. The method of claim 9, further comprising implementing a second plurality of  
2 procedures according to a second interface, wherein said second plurality of procedures  
3 enable said access module to initiate and terminate an instance of said access module.

1 11. The method of claim 10, implementing a third plurality of procedures according  
2 to a third interface wherein said third plurality of procedures enable said access block to  
3 communicate an operation selected by said user, wherein said operation is executed on data  
4 accessed by said access module.

1 12. The method of claim 11, wherein said operation is executed on a user application  
2 which retrieves said data from the corresponding database.

1 13. A method of enabling a first client system to access a plurality of databases  
2 through a corresponding plurality of client systems contained in a manufacturing plant,  
3 wherein each of said plurality of client systems is already designed to access data in a

4       corresponding one of said plurality of databases, said method comprising:  
5             executing a user application which is related to operation/control of a manufacturing  
6       process in said manufacturing plant;  
7             enabling said user to instantiate a user interface from said user application;  
8             enabling said user to specify a database of interest and a search criteria using said  
9       user interface, wherein said database of interest is accessible via a second client contained  
10      in said plurality of client systems;  
11            sending said search criteria to said second client;  
12            receiving a corresponding response; and  
13            displaying said corresponding response.

1       14. The method of claim 13, said method further comprising:  
2            enabling said user to specify an operation associated with data forming said  
3       corresponding response;  
4            executing said operation.

1       15. The method of claim 14, wherein said user interface is implemented in the form  
2       of an access module executed when said user instantiates said user interface, said method  
3       further comprising:  
4            receiving data representing said operation in said user application; and  
5            sending said data representing said operation and data representing said response to  
6       said second client, wherein said second client executes said operation using said response.

1           16. The method of claim 15, wherein said data representing said response comprises  
2    an identifier of the data retrieved from said database of interest.